



Stay Active This Summer!



The importance of exercise and outdoor play for optimal childhood development.

Summer is the perfect season to let children play outside. While the weather is nice and free time is abundant, it's a perfect time to encourage your child to show self-efficacy through independent play, develop muscle tone and coordination, and use his or her creativity and imagination to create wonderful, make-believe worlds.

Brain Balance has a plan for kids who struggle. Brain Balance has worked with over 30,000 children and their families and we know we can help yours, too.

Visit [BrainBalance.com](https://www.brainbalance.com) to learn more.



Brain Benefits of Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is not only beneficial, but also crucial for the brain's healthy development. Researchers say that the frontal cortex, which is responsible for controlling emotions and problem solving, is activated during playtime*. The experience of playing forces the brain to make those neurotransmitter connections that are critical to a child's development. Imaginative play and child development go hand in hand.



Body Benefits of Outdoor Play

For children that have challenges, outdoor play is especially critical in core muscle development, small motor skill refinement, and increasing coordination. Children need to navigate obstacles, maintain appropriate space around other children, and use their strength to throw, catch, manipulate objects or tackle a jungle gym. Many children are also vitamin D deficient, and natural exposure to sunshine can help boost a child's immune system.

Gross motor skills are necessary for kids to develop balance, strength, endurance, and more. When you tell your child to "Go outside and play," you're not just getting him or her out of the house and out from underfoot. You're also promoting healthy brain development, as well as a good workout for your child's body.

*Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/08/06/336361277/scientists-say-childsplay-helps-build-a-better-brain>



No matter how hot it gets, it's important to keep your body moving all summer long.

Here are ideas for how to stay active as temperatures rise.



Kids who are sensory sensitive may not be tolerant to the drastic temperature changes that accompany hot summer temps outside and cold air conditioned air inside. Limit outdoor activities to early morning or late evening to avoid the more intense daytime temperatures.

90° to 100°+ - Build a Fort

Whether you use linens and furniture indoors or sticks and leaves outside, fort building is a great activity that allows kids to express their creativity and cognitive skills while also moving their bodies. They work on planning skills for the initial fort design as well as problem solving ability to fix it if it falls apart. They also build core and upper extremity strength as they complete the structure and play within it. Small spaces can facilitate a calming or regulating effect for some children.



In order to avoid stressful triggers in the water, it's best to begin swimming lessons in a private setting. This helps the instructor identify triggers and figure out appropriate goals.

80° to 90° - Swim

Swimming is one of the best sensory activities thanks to its even hydrostatic deep pressure. Be mindful of the other sensory sensitivities that may arise around swimming environments. When putting on sunscreen, your child may prefer a light touch or a firmer massage. Consider putting the sunscreen on before arriving at the beach or lake, so that it has time to dry - minimizing the amount of sand or dirt that sticks to the skin. Provide water shoes or socks to protect the bottom of feet from extra-sensory input and burning. For kids who are extra sensitive to smells, try nose plugs to minimize the chlorine smell at some pools or find a local pool that uses saline in lieu of chlorine.



A European study** revealed that traffic noise in a classroom increases the severity of ADHD symptoms by around 25 percent. However, the same research also revealed that "green space" actually decreases the effects of the condition.

70° to 80° - Pack a Picnic and Play Outside

A great location for any outdoor activity is the local park — particularly if it's quiet and a good distance from the nearest highway. Pack a picnic before you head off, and plan a few fun games, such as soccer and Frisbee. Children often thrive in environments without walls, so be sure to give them some freedom to explore a little. You can even plan a scavenger hunt! Create a list of objects from the natural world for your children to collect. On the list could be things such as tree branches, rocks, flowers and leaves. Start the clock, and send the children on a mission to collect all the items as quickly as possible. You can add teamwork and communication to the scavenger hunt by pairing children together.